

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS AND ANNUAL REPORTS ON METHODS,
USED IN RURAL FAMILY LIVING OUTLOOK WORK *

Introduction

The following excerpts from two sources -- letters from home management specialists who described in detail how they were handling the 1950 outlook work, and 1949 annual reports describing how the 1949 outlook work was presented and results. No effort has been made to review all 1949 annual reports.

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DELAWARE USES OUTLOOK IN BUDGETING AND EVALUATES.

Late in December, the home management specialist met with the home demonstration agents. She had prepared for them a briefed family living outlook, charts and pamphlets giving Delaware's farm family living figures, and a sheet giving steps in budgeting.

In January this material was presented to the women in three parts.

1. Looking ahead with Delaware farm families (outlook).
2. Discussion of the leaflet on family living figures.
 - a. The 1948 spending of Mr. and Mrs. Average Family
 - b. A sheet showing the comparison of family living expenditures over an 8-year period.
 - c. Use of outlook in budgeting.

Steps in family planning and budgeting were discussed along with the outlook at all home demonstration club meetings in January.

How to budget suggestions covered:

1. With the entire family, list short- and long-time goals you all hope to reach now and in the future, (such things as land ownership, building, large equipment, new car, etc).
2. Figure your present financial situation (such as regular income, interest, etc).
3. Set up savings and emergency "kitty" (that means life insurance, bonds, savings accounts, etc).
4. Write down fixed annual expenses of insurance, taxes, interest, and similar items.

* Prepared by Mary Rokahr, In Charge, Home Economics Section, Extension Service, U.S.D.A., Washington 25, D. C. May 1950

5. Estimate monthly expenses for such items as food, operating expenses, transportation, personal, recreation, reading, education, and medical care.
6. Outline the infrequent expenses for the coming year. Decide the sequence in which to buy large items so that the goals may be reached at the time those things are most needed by the family (may be long way ahead).
7. Check estimated annual expenses with estimated income. Then refigure expenses so that they will balance with the income-- may need paring down in some items and building up in others.

Eight hundred mimeographed outlines on "Make Your Spending Plans Come Within Your Income" were distributed among interested families. No actual check was asked for as to budget plans made, but the figures are probably included among the number reporting timely economic assistance as a result of this budget discussion, along with outlook material.

Evaluation of outlook material: Extension is the organization best qualified to discuss economic trends with Delaware farmers. There is always an attempt made to bring outlook situations close to home so as to see what is happening in Delaware. The county agents make use of what information applies directly to their county situations. These outlook facts as presented in October or November may change, however, as new trends appear. The home management specialist attempt to keep the agents up to date in her field so that outlook can be a useful tool throughout the year and not just for the one presentation.

Outlook facts are basic for program determination and as such are offered to the various extension councils for their consideration.

Family living figures have been used along with outlook for several years now. These seem to strengthen statements made and make local application of national trends. Outlook is given as a guide to wiser family planning, and what people have accomplished is reflected very definitely in the story of their family spending plans. The specialist believes that the increase of family protection in things such as regular savings and better medical care although hard to put down in figures, can definitely be traced to these better family planning discussions over a period of years. A change in attitude does take time. Perhaps the fact that State and county councils recommend outlook materials as a program the first of each year is another indication that the program has done something for them and is recognized as being as important as the skills they learn. The satisfactions gained from such a program merely need a longer-range view.

(Annual Report, Louise R. Whitcomb)

IOWA STAFF COVERS THE STATE IN 1950

"The State was covered by five teams. Three staff members made up a team. We traveled for 2 weeks. People in three or four counties would be in to each meeting. Those in attendance were invited by the county staff personnel, and those registered included bankers, farm managers, S.C.S., F.H.A., F.F.A., vocational education teachers, GI instructors, young and old farmers, members of program planning committees, county Farm Bureau officers.

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"Our days followed a pattern about like this:

- 10:00 - Introductions and greetings
- 10:15 - Outline for day and purpose of outlook
- 10:30 - 11:45 - Business outlook, discussed with use of blackboard, charts and kit references.
- 11:45 - 1:00 - Lunch
- 1:00 - 1:45 - Commodity outlook and Government program
- 1:45 - 2:40 - Family living outlook
Stretcher
- 2:45 - 3:30 - Summary and discussion on How To Use Outlook and Present It. Kit, questions and answers, problem, and agree-disagree questions were devices used.

"Those in attendance were enthusiastic. We had good participation from the men and women in the last session of the day.

"From here on now we really go to work with outlook. The central staff had the first look at the material. Each in turn would interpret it in his or her field. Kits of publicity items and radio transcriptions have gone to all the counties, and live radio programs have started. Program-planning committees will be using outlook. Necessary changes will be incorporated as the year progresses. And so it will go on and on until it gets out to all our farm families."

(Letter from Naomi Shank).

VARIETY OF METHODS USED IN KENTUCKY.

- A. Presentation of high lights of meeting to Extension supervisors, specialists, and research workers at their monthly meeting. Many questions were asked.
- B. A circular letter was sent to all agents, in which outlook information was summarized. Attention was called to background information in rural family living reports.
- C. Three radio talks were based on outlook material.
- D. In Boone County, Perry Summers and Ida C. Hagman conducted an all-day outlook conference for representatives from various organizations in the county. These people served as leaders and were to present the material to their groups. The leaders participated in the discussions. Both specialists considered this a worth-while meeting with far-reaching effects.
- E. In Shelby County, outlook information was coordinated with financial planning. The agents and specialists, Perry Summers and Ida C. Hagman, adapted the material to Shelby County farm family needs. At a night meeting, the two specialists, assisted by the assistant farm and home agents, put on a skit showing how a family made a financial plan based on outlook information. The four leaders from eight communities had been carefully selected by the agents. They were responsible for putting on a similar program in local communities. A framework of the skit was given each leader. The conversation was spontaneous.

Mrs. Dorothy Craig, the home demonstration agent in Shelby County, reports as follows on the farm and home management community meetings: "At each of the eight community meetings, the home demonstration agent thought, 'How gratifying it would be for Miss Hagman and Mr. Summers, who had trained the leaders, to see the skits that were presented.' These meetings were sponsored by the Shelby County Extension Advisory Committee. The county agent and home demonstration agent made all preliminary preparations. The purpose was to develop a consciousness among farm families of the need for more over-all family planning in order to do a more effective job of spending.

"The evening programs consisted of a movie, County Fair; the presentation of the skit, Planning Family Finances; and a social hour. Four leaders from each of the 8 communities - a total of 32 leaders, took part in the skits. The Farm Bureau and community homemakers' clubs served refreshments.

"Aside from the training given the 32 leaders, it was evident that much thinking by the audience was stimulated, as evidenced by their remarks. The skits were educational and entertaining. Such variation in Extension teaching offers the agents a change and gives them more enthusiasm and inspiration."

(Annual Report, Ida Hagman and Frances Stallard)

MASSACHUSETTS SENDS A PROGRESS REPORT

"As I look back on the Outlook Conference, I realize more and more how valuable and helpful it was to me personally, as well as in the work we do. Listed below are the ways in which I have used outlook thus far:

1. An article prepared for the outlook issue of Farm Economics Facts.
2. An article prepared for the Young Farmers and Homemakers publication.
3. A news article prepared and sent to 200 newspapers in the State.
4. An 8-page illustrated circular called The Family Looks Forward, 1950, has been prepared; indications are that at least 5,000, maybe more, will be distributed.
5. Report given at Bristol and Plymouth Advisory Council meetings.
6. A radio talk prepared to be given in December over WHDH, Boston, and a platter for transcription sent to the six counties having radio programs.
7. A report presented to the home economics extension State staff members.
8. A report given to the instructors of the veterans-on-the-farm training program.
9. Individual conferences held with Mrs. Larson, Mrs. Page, and Miss Bamesberger to give them information pertaining to their field of subject matter."

(Letter from Barbara Higgins)

IN MINNESOTA OUTLOOK AIMS AT BROADENING PEOPLE'S THINKING.

"I am enclosing material that may be of interest to you. Our agents seemed very much interested in our discussions on outlook. I believe that we will see revived interest in money management. I surely hope so. We have 60 home agents, the majority of whom, although young, are alert and smart 'gals.'

"At the symposium on Thursday we tried to point up problems of rural people that are more than 'skills' in making a garment or covering a chair--problems that influence the quality and satisfactions in living. We endeavored to broaden their thinking about rural living.

"The chart on cycles of family life was enlarged on wrapping paper using black and red crayons. After my presentation, about 4 minutes were used by each clothing, food, and home furnishing specialist to indicate probable demands on women at each period and how they might help to push up the peak of experience.

"Miss Hobart, nutrition specialist, believes the charts on agricultural outlook were especially helpful to her."

(Letter from Mary May Miller.)

MISSISSIPPI HOLDS DISTRICT MEETINGS.

The home management specialist and extension economist attended the National Agricultural and Family Living Outlook Conference in Washington, D.C., November 1. This was essential in preparing and presenting the outlook material used in Mississippi. The meeting was so early we decided to have our county and home agent training in five district outlook training meetings. It was rather difficult to get our charts and leaflet ready for December, but we felt it was worth while.

A. How outlook information was used in 1949.

1. All outlook work included both agriculture and family living.
2. The home management specialist was responsible for --
 - a. Compiling the section on Farm Family Living in the State Outlook report.
 - b. Deciding on and obtaining the charts used in all meetings.
 - c. Presenting the family living phase of the outlook information. The foods, clothing, and rural electrification specialists prepared the material used in their fields. The home management specialist prepared the housing and family spending information and compiled all sections.
 - (1) Bimonthly staff conference.

- (2) District meeting for county and home agents.
Farm and home management allowed $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours for presenting outlook information.
- (3) Attended five district meetings and presented farm family living information. The coordinating council from every county was invited to attend one of these meetings. They were asked to assist the county and home agents in carrying this information back to the counties.
- (4) At five district outlook meetings, in December 1948, there was a total attendance of 410 agricultural and home agents.

3. Use of outlook information in counties:

- a. Educational topics in January council.
- b. In home demonstration club meetings.
- c. In community meetings with both men and women in attendance.
- d. In news letters.
- e. In radio broadcasts.
- f. 10,000 copies of farm and home outlook charts put up in county offices.

The home management specialist thought that extension workers appreciated and used outlook information more than ever before. The entire organization considered that 1949 would be a critical year for farm people. They also recognized the need for all the sound information and assistance that the agricultural leadership could give them in making the needed adjustment to peacetime conditions. They were ready and willing to join hands in disseminating this material. Both the State home demonstration agent and the girls' 4-H Club leader served as team members. This was the home management specialist's most difficult problem in selecting and training four women to visit all counties in each district.

All district agents, men and women, attended the meetings in their respective districts. They sent letters and arranged dates and schedules. The director of extension also gave his wholehearted support.

(Annual Report, Lorraine Ford Huff.)

MANY PEOPLE REACHED IN MISSOURI.

The use of outlook information: A series of 11 district training meetings were held for all the extension workers in the State. The home management specialists cooperated with the agricultural economics specialists in the preparation of material for the meeting for the agents to use in holding their meetings later in the county. A total of 956,749 persons received outlook information in the counties in 1949.

NEBRASKA SAYS OUTLOOK NOT A "PROJECT."

Most farm families make plans for the future--perhaps not on paper, but they like to size up the situation and look ahead. They seek information to help them in deciding what farming enterprises to undertake another year. Family living changes they make are dependent on both prices received for their commodities and prices they will pay for goods purchased.

Nebraska's general objective in disseminating farm and home outlook information, therefore, is an educational one designed to aid farm families in making decisions regarding the economic aspects of their individual farm business and family living.

The farm management and home management specialists who attended the Washington meeting in November 1949 have worked cooperatively in preparing outlook material and programs. In order to meet the needs of Nebraska's varied type-of-farming regions it is necessary to bring together information on several outlook aspects, such as the following:

The general economic situation and outlook in national income, labor, general price level, foreign demand and trade,

Agricultural prices and farm income outlook.

Individual commodity, agricultural production, and marketing outlook, according to regional interest.

Relation of farm income as a factor in farm family living.

Family living commodities, savings, and the like.

Two special outlook sessions were held for the State extension staff. At the first session the farm and home management specialists who attended the Washington meeting presented a summary of general outlook. This was followed by open discussion and questions from the specialists. As a follow-up each specialist was asked to prepare an outlook statement of his own field of subject matter pointing out special situations that might be peculiar to this state. These reports, together with discussion, were presented by the specialists at a second outlook session. The reports were given to an outlook committee, which will use the Nebraska outlook information in the preparation of a special dodger and publicity reports. The dodger is to be brief and will be for popular distribution in the counties.

This is the second year that this method of formulating State outlook information has been used. Both the agricultural and home economics specialists have given favorable expression to the idea of an opportunity to become acquainted with the outlook as a whole and to see its relation to their own work.

"Outlook" is really not a project in itself. Almost every subject matter field uses outlook in its regular presentation. The farm and home management specialists use it as a part of their farm and home record work, relating the findings in account books to future planning in the light of the outlook situation. They gave radio talks on several out-of-State stations.

The balanced farming and family living groups nearly all have a discussion on economic outlook at the time they summarize and analyze their records. Veterans' classes with which the farm and home specialists work also receive such information as a part of their record work.

(Annual Report, Mary Runnals Elliott and Gersila Guthrie, and Clara Leopold)

A NORTH CAROLINA HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENT'S APPRAISAL OF OUTLOOK.

Mrs. Velma Beam Moore, home demonstration agent, Hayesville, Clay County, North Carolina, says:

"These meetings were held in the neighborhoods as usual--not in large groups, but in small gatherings where discussion could be encouraged.

"The county agent made a 'report to the farm family' on the long-range agricultural program, and its progress during the past 2 years. The charts were used again, the memory of the folks refreshed as to its origin, 2-year results noted, and plans for the future discussed. It was very interesting to watch the expressions of the folks as they listened and later talked it over.

"The home agent approached the subject from the standpoint of how the home phase of the program has already measured up to the farm side. From a survey made by home demonstration club members we found that at least 90 percent of the farm families had made some kind of home improvement during the past 6 years; especially outstanding were the improvements made in the purchase and use of electrical equipment during the past 2 years. All except three small areas have been electrified or will have this service within the next 6 months. The place we have fallen down in this program plan is in the field for food production--especially with respect to tree and small fruits and beef for table use.

"Another phase of the 10-year program approached by the home agent was 'What has your community accomplished in this 10-year plan of work? As a group are you and your neighbors following these plans or better ones?' This has excited quite a bit of interest, and we hope the interest will show results in community activity in the future."

(Annual Report, Pauline E. Gordon)

LOCAL LEADERS TRAINED IN OHIO.

Most of the help of family economists has been given directly to agents or lay people. In November 1949, however, economic outlook training schools were held for lay leaders, in districts of four counties each. Farm men and women were trained to aid in presenting outlook information in their own counties. Two panels comprising two rural economics specialists, one home management specialist, and representative farm men and women and local business people were used as the teaching group in each meeting. It is expected that this same method will be used in the counties to present outlook information.

Results: According to 28 home demonstration agents, 2,406 people participated in some organized phase of the family economic project. In addition, 3,340 improved their buying practices; 777 kept home accounts; 368 kept personal accounts; and 615 made financial plans.

(Annual Report, Thelma Beall and Marie Walters)

TEXAS SURVEYS OUTLOOK NEEDS.

The home management and agricultural economists in Texas, last year, cooperated in sending a questionnaire to 130 county extension agents concerning the preparation and presentation of outlook. Some of their results were as follows:

Use of outlook: Of the 130 county extension workers to whom the questionnaire was sent, 87 reported that they had used the outlook material sent to them in 1949, and 4 said no; 39 did not return the questionnaire.

Use of leaflets: Two types of leaflets were prepared in 1949: A general one on A Look Ahead for Texas Rural Families, and specific leaflets on individual subjects and commodities. Seventy-three agents said they used the general outlook circular, 9 said no, 5 made no answer; 81 said yes, they used the individual leaflets, 2 no, and 3 no answer.

Needs for 1950: The agents were asked if they cared to have similar leaflets in 1950. Sixty-six said they would like to have outlook leaflets in 1950, 46 wanted family living sheets, and 65 wanted radio and press releases.

Whys: Agents were also asked to tell what limited the use of material sent to them. Some of the comments were as follows:

I could have used this material to better advantage had I been with extension work longer and been more familiar with the whole program.

Could not always be tied in with planned meetings, and farm families were not interested in attending an outlook meeting.

The year is usually about over before this material comes out.

The information had been in all daily newspapers months earlier and was out of date before counties received it.

Use suggestions: Agents were also asked for suggestions on how to present outlook information. Some comments were as follows:

Each time the county home demonstration council met, the leaflets were on hand and attention was called to them.

Actually--a few women asked for these! They thought the material was presented in an understandable way and "not dry like most outlook material."

I have used these leaflets for short side demonstrations sometimes given by club members as this information comes to my desk. I brief it and use a few minutes at each meeting to pass on the information not directly related to the subject.

VERMONT ASSISTS AGENTS IN KEEPING UP TO DATE.

Timely information in many phases of housing, home management, and home furnishing was given to the home demonstration agents at training conferences and at other times throughout the year. According to agents' reports, 1,732 women in 13 counties used timely information in 1949.

Information concerning outlook for rural family living is discussed at each training conference. Ways in which this information may be brought to the attention of rural women are suggested. In addition to this, the specialist sent out circular letters several times during the year containing pertinent information.

In cooperation with Verle Houghaboom, extension economist, a printed outlook statement was written early in 1949. Approximately 17,500 copies of this statement were distributed throughout the State's county offices and through home management project leaders to whom the specialist sent this statement along with a letter. Statistical summary: A total of 99 out of 338 leaders reported that 1496 women heard or read the outlook statement from 13 counties.

(Annual Report by Charlotte A. Beatty)

VIRGINIA'S ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S OUTLOOK LETTER TO AGENTS.

"You will find enclosed a brief summary of 1949-50 Outlook Conference. This, with the Outlook Charts and Rural Family Living, which you have already received, should furnish you with pertinent information to be used all through the year with your farm families. You may want to present some of this material at your January home demonstration club meetings, and use some of it that is particularly applicable to your county in newspaper articles and radio talks.

"After carefully studying the charts, if you are interested in holding outlook meetings, you may wish to secure the film strip which is available through Mr. Michael, Extension Division, Blacksburg, Va.

"With the decrease in farm income, better planning of money spent should be considered by all families. More farm people should be encouraged to keep records of how they spend their money.

"Farm people want and need economic information. How well they adjust to changes depends on their knowledge of such matters. Every agent is urged to see that this information is placed in the hands of rural people."

(Letter from Maude E. Wallace)

